

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO SPEND REVENUE MAXIMIZATION GRANT FUNDS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO RECRUIT ADDITIONAL FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOMES

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of spending additional grant revenues located within the Department of Human Services to allow increased recruitment of foster and adoptive homes.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the City Council approve the spending of additional grant revenues currently located within the Department of Human Services to help support the foster families who currently share their homes with the City's children and to allow for recruitment of additional foster and adoptive homes. The additional revenues will allow the conversion of a part-time Social Worker II position to a full-time Social Worker II position in the Department of Human Services. This grant-funded position will terminate upon the expiration of the grant funds and the individual who will fill the position will be notified of the condition of employment at the time they are hired and will sign an agreement of understanding regarding this condition of employment.

**DISCUSSION:** Following legislative changes to the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1998 and to the Code of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Social Services approved federal Title IV-E funds to recruit, train and prepare foster and adoptive homes. In June of 1999, using these new funds, City Council approved a part-time Social Worker II position in the Department of Human Services dedicated to recruiting foster and adoptive homes (item 23, June 22, 1999 Council meeting).

Currently, there are 144 children in foster care and an average of four children enter foster care each month. There is a continuing need to recruit foster homes to assist these abused and neglected children. Many of the children need special care and foster parents who can help them overcome perinatal drug or alcohol exposure, development disabilities, attachment and behavior disorders, and emotional problems resulting from physical and sexual abuse.

There is also a special need to recruit foster homes within the City of Alexandria. Currently, there are ninety-four approved foster homes and only twenty are located within the City limits.

The initial removal of a child from their family causes considerable emotional trauma. Having to place the child outside of their community increases the emotional impact. Not only do children lose their families, they are removed from all familiar settings, including school, church, and social relationships. Furthermore, not being in close proximity to family complicates the reunification process.

The part-time foster home recruiter increased the number of new approved foster homes from 12 to 18 annually, a 50% increase. However, the part-time status of the position and the reduced benefits affected recruitment and retention of staff. The position is currently vacant. Staff estimate that a full-time recruiter will increase new homes to 24 annually and will be able to focus on increased new homes in the City.

The Child Welfare Partnership is collaborating with the Department on a recruitment campaign for foster and adoptive homes and a full-time recruiter is essential to the campaign's success. This position will not only focus on finding new resources but will also work to help support the many excellent foster families that now share their homes with the City's children.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no fiscal impact to the City. The additional funds needed to convert the Social Worker II position from part-time to full-time are available through enhanced federal reimbursement from the Revenue Maximization program. Revenue maximization funds must be used to enhance and expand human service programs or to develop new initiatives to better meet human service needs in the City. The funds needed to convert this position to full-time are \$30,740 which will be derived from Revenue Maximization earnings.

**ATTACHMENTS:** None

**STAFF:**

Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal and Financial Affairs

Meg O'Regan Director, Department of Human Services

Suzanne Chis, Director, Division of Social Services

Pamela Hyde, Chief of Services, Division of Social Services

Marcie Kavanaugh, Director of Operations, Department of Human Services

Carol Moore, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget